

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1-19. (cancelled)

20. (Currently amended) A method for treating an inorganic slurry ~~to maintain the slurry in a substantially homogeneous phase and~~ to preserve the slurry against bacterial contamination, ~~which comprises the addition~~ comprising the steps of

(I) providing a slurry,

(II) adding to the slurry ~~[[of]]~~ an effective amount of a composition comprising:

(a) a tetrakis(hydroxyorgano)phosphonium salt (herein THP<sup>+</sup> salt) selected from tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium sulphate, tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium chloride, tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium phosphate, tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium nitrate and

tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium oxalate; and

(b) a dispersant selected from the group consisting of:

(i) phosphonated compounds containing at least one tertiary nitrogen atom; and

(ii) homopolymers of unsaturated acids;

(III) maintaining the slurry in a substantially homogeneous phase thereby to preserve the slurry against bacterial contamination.

21. **(Previously presented)** A method according to claim 20, in which the THP<sup>+</sup> salt is tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium sulphate.

22. **(Previously presented)** A method according to claim 20, in which the THP<sup>+</sup> salt is tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium chloride, phosphate, nitrate or oxalate.

23. **(Previously presented)** A method according to claim 20, in which the dispersant (b(i)) is a phosphonated compound containing one tertiary nitrogen atom.

24. **(Previously presented)** A method according to claim 23, in which the dispersant (b(i)) is a sodium salt of nitrilotris(methylene phosphonate).

25. **(Previously presented)** A method according to claim 24, in which the salt is the tetra-sodium salt.

26. **(Previously presented)** A method according to claim 20, in which the dispersant (b(ii)) is a homopolymer of acrylic acid.

27. **(Previously presented)** A method according to claim 26, in which the homopolymer has a molecular weight in the range 2000 to 5000.

28. **(Previously presented)** A method according to claim 20, in which the ratio of THP<sup>+</sup> salt to dispersant in the composition is about 2:1 (as active ingredients).

29. **(Previously presented)** A method according to claim 20, in which the composition is added to the slurry in an amount in the range 10 ppm to 1000 ppm (by weight of the slurry).

30. **(Previously presented)** A method according to claim 20, in which the composition is added to the slurry in an amount of about 750 ppm (by weight of the slurry).

31. **(Previously presented)** A method, according to claim 20, in which the slurry comprises a calcium carbonate-based slurry.

32. **(Previously presented)** A method according to claim 20, in which the slurry comprises a pigment slurry, a clay slurry or a cement slurry.

33-34. **(Cancelled)**

35. **(Currently amended)** A method of treating an inorganic slurry ~~to maintain the slurry in a substantially homogeneous phase and~~ to preserve the slurry against bacterial contamination,

~~comprising the addition~~ comprising the steps of

(I) providing a slurry,

(II) adding to the slurry ~~[[of]]~~ an effective amount of a  
composition comprising:

(a) tetrakis(hydroxyorgano)phosphonium salt (herein THP<sup>+</sup> salt) selected from tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium sulphate, tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium chloride, tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium phosphate, tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium nitrate and tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium oxalate; and

(b) a dispersant which is the tetra sodium salt of nitrilotris (methylene phosphonate)and

(III) maintaining the slurry in a substantially homogeneous phase thereby to preserve the slurry against bacterial contamination.

36-37. (Cancelled)

38. (Currently amended) A method of treating an inorganic slurry  
~~to maintain the slurry in a substantially homogeneous phase and~~

to preserve the slurry against bacterial contamination,

~~comprising the addition~~ comprising the steps of

(I) providing a slurry,

(II) adding to the slurry [[of]] an effective amount of a composition comprising:

(a) a tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium salt (herein THP<sup>+</sup> salt) selected from tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium sulphate, tetrakis (hydroxymethyl)phosphonium chloride, tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium phosphate, tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium nitrate and tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium oxalate; and

(b) a dispersant which is a homopolymer of acrylic acid, the homopolymer having a molecular weight in the range of 2,000 to 5,000, and

(II) maintaining the slurry in a substantially homogeneous phase thereby to preserve the slurry against bacterial contamination.

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39. **(New)** The method of claim 20 wherein the slurry being provided contains 70-80% by weight of undissolved suspended solids.